

publications or elsewhere, I would be happy to write as a spokesman for Price's defence.

R. J. HASTINGS

*Crookes and the Physical Phenomena of Mediumship*

SIR,—In April 1875 (*Spiritualist*, 23 April, 1875) Serjeant Cox announced the Council for his newly-formed Psychological Society. Attending Council's first meeting were Myers and Crookes. On Page 70 of the current *Proceedings* the authors mention the former's work with Florence Cook and Mrs Fay. If Myers continued his inquiries into physical phenomena after January 1875 it is possible, through his association with Crookes and Cox, that he sat at the later 'Leila' seances. Though Cox had had a brief 'break' with Crookes over the joint sittings of Florence Cook and Mary Showers, they were both reconciled at the time of the Fay inquiries.

The break with Crookes now healed did not stop Serjeant Cox from attending a reception given by Mrs Guppy for the American medium Mrs Hardy. This took place on August 6, 1875. Mrs Guppy's part in the activities of Volckman, who had brought about an earlier alleged 'exposure' of Florence Cook, were well known. She later married Volckman. It is believed that she had attempted a violent assault on Florence Cook, a medium she envied and loathed. At this particular reception was Mrs Ross-Church, whose praise of Florence Cook is excessive in the extreme. It is ironical, however, that Mrs Ross-Church and Cox attended a reception given by Mrs Guppy, from which Crookes had been excluded, in particular since Mrs Guppy's reputation was more than dubious.

At this period Miss Showers was continuing her seances even though Cox's 'exposure' at his home a year or so earlier could hardly have been forgotten. Apparently, Cox's position was now changed. His approval of Mrs Fay, his consorting with a friend of Miss Cook (i.e. Mrs Ross-Church), enabled him to return as a welcome visitor to Spiritualist circles. In August 1875 Florence Cook was still in poor health and holidaying in the South of France. These dates are of some significance as is the behaviour of Crookes at this time.

Toward the end of 1875 the Showers 'exposure', as seen from the correspondence between Home and Crookes, forced Crookes to withdraw from his inquiries into mediumship. We know that Miss Showers, later Mrs Nugent James, continued her mediumship without difficulties. The Cox 'exposure' had left little mark.

The confession to Crookes was of a private nature. Indeed, Maxwell Close, a scholar of some scientific repute, reported most glowingly on a sitting he had with Miss Showers in July 1876, and at which Sir Charles E. Isham attended. Maxwell Close's exceptional scientific ability was mentioned in the obituary Sir William Barrett wrote for the *S.P.R. Journal* (November 1903).

There is thus no certainty that Miss Showers' confession was as it now appears to be. As in the case of Eva C. and Palladino it is evident that cheating and confession are common happenings even when non-fraudulent phenomena are manifested at other times with the same medium.

Contrary to the statement that in February 1875 'Leila' sittings were under 'vigorous way', there is *no* evidence that 'Leila' manifested *before* the summer of 1875. In February, after Mrs Corner's recent return from the Continent, she resumed sittings for Blackburn and Crookes. On February 16, she sat with her sponsors and produced alleged telekinetic phenomena. Ironically, the *Spiritualist* (Feb. 19) reports a seance with Mrs Fay, Blackburn and Mrs Corner were among the sitters. Poor health or not, Mrs Corner's correspondence suggests a natural jealousy of Mrs Fay's powers and success. The materializations 'Stella' and 'Leila' seem to have developed *after* Mrs Fay's departure from this country (Spring 1875); and the correspondence, while revealing the re-emergence of full-forms, reflects the private nature of the seances. The press of the period, however, reports a visit by the medium to Blackburn with her sister-in-law (*Spiritualist*, 4 June, 1875). Following the publication of the 'Leila' letter by Mrs Crookes (written June 21, published 25 June, *Spiritualist*), Mrs Corner departed once more for the Continent. There is no evidence that she was again engaged in mediumistic work in *this* country before her departure at the end of the year for the Far East.

The authors have *erred* about Crookes' activities in later life. They were able to find 'only one certain and one very doubtful allusion to sittings attended by Crookes during the forty year period from the termination of his seances with Eva Fay and Florence Cook to the death of his wife.' They refer to sittings with Duguid and a possible seance with Mrs. Corner, but surprisingly they fail to refer to the important sittings with *Carancini*. These, held in 1909, were reported by Baggally in Volume 14, *S.P.R. Journal*. Crookes and his wife played a major role in these seances as did others such as Feilding, Dr MacDougall, Mrs Sidgwick, and Miss Newton.

To return to Miss Showers. The case against her is not final

and a line of present research is to determine her association, through marriage, with the Sidgwicks. At some later stage I hope to publish a report on the later activities of this medium whose background was both non-professional and well-to-do. Lt.-Col. C. B. Appleby of the National Army Museum, Sandhurst, has allowed me to see the contributions made by the Showers family to Britain's history in India. The Showers were a family of soldiers and Empire builders. At his death her father, General Charles Lionel Showers, was given an extensive obituary in the *London Times* (Sept. 13, 1895). His daughter's unusual behaviour (mediumship, exposures and scandals) in no way seemed to have inhibited his promotion over the years. On August 11, 1873, he had written to Queen Victoria and described the marvels attributed to his daughter's mediumship which at first he had rejected. He suggested that Her Majesty might wish to witness the manifestations by allowing his daughter to visit the Castle. Subsequently this letter was published in the *Examiner* of 11 November, 1876, and in *The Medium and Daybreak* of 17 November. His wife had released the letter in face of hostile criticism about their daughter's mediumship.

Through the good offices of the Countess of Longford I am informed that there is no record of Miss Showers visiting the Queen at Windsor and whether she did in fact see the Queen is uncertain.

MOSTYN GILBERT

SIR,—In an Appendix to the paper 'William Crookes and the Physical Phenomena of Mediumship' (*Proceedings*, March 1964) we stated that we intended to publish in another journal some additional evidence and comments on the Anderson testimony. Readers of our paper may care to know that this material is to appear in the Autumn issue of *Light*, obtainable from the College of Psychic Science, 16 Queensberry Place, London, S.W. 7. In the same issue will be the contemporary reports by Stainton Moses of the series of sittings at Crookes's house with the medium Williams, mentioned on p. 45 of the *Proceedings* paper.

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### *Telepathy and the Daily Mirror*

SIR,—It was generous (and realistic) of Mr Medhurst to exonerate the personnel of this Unit from any deliberate attempt to